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ABSTRACT

When a woman is promoted to an administrative role in a central office, her transition can be especially difficult. Aspects of the socialization issues resident in this experience, as revealed in a narrative study of one woman administrator's experiences, are reported. The narrative, drawn from journal entries made during the administrator's first year in central office, recount her reactions and emotions as she adjusted to this new position. Interwoven with the narrative are excerpts from the literature that are intended to underlie and to substantiate the analysis of the situations encountered. The report outlines how a move to central office will result in the administrator, male or female, feeling alienated. It also discusses how both women and men administrators can experience a sense of worthlessness and a fear of failure in the new role. It is suggested that those moving to central office must establish contacts, networks, and mentors to learn all the facets of the position. There is also the powerful influence that the socialization of female administrators as "women" or "feminine" influences how others will perceive her and how she will perceive herself. Contains 21 references. (RJM)

What Does It Take?: Tales about Socialization and a Woman Administrator during Her First Year in District Office

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What Does It Take?:
Tales about Socialization and a Woman Administrator during Her First Year in District Office

I can't believe what happened. I had read about half of your study during the day. That night I was telling my husband about it and all of a sudden, I found myself crying. It was so real and so much like the things that had been happening to me. I don't know--it just really affected me! (a female central office administrator)

As I listened to these words over the phone, I felt as if they were an affirmation of my effort to write a study that not only addressed realistically the first year experience of a woman administrator in central office, but also was appealing and readable. "The most I can expect, I suppose, is that the reader has been attracted to the story, has been caught up in the narrative, the conflict, and the emotion. That was, after all, one of my desires" (Duncan, 1993, p. 220).

This paper draws from that study--a study which was really the story of a woman struggling to transition from building principal to central office administrator. As such, the narrative is used in such a way as to present slices of reality that recall the reactions and emotions I experienced during my first year in central office. Interwoven with the narrative are excepts from the literature which underlie and substantiate my analyses of the situations. These excepts should help the reader, as they helped me, to understand the experiences.

As I talk with administrators at every level, both female and male, about this study, and as I present selected ideas from the study to groups of educators, it seems that the story and the examples evoke a somewhat universal reaction. There is a human response to the experience that encourages others to engage in intense dialogue with me, to ask questions, and to immediately compare their experiences with mine. This paper will draw tales from the study which will hopefully elicit similar interest. Although the study in its entirety

examines other facets of the experience such as the importance of pedagogy and issues of power, this paper will focus only on some socialization issues important to the experience.

Changing Positions "Is So Very Hard to Do!"

We do not think of an administrator in the school district's central office as being basically different than an administrator in the school building. An administrator is an administrator is an administrator. We make assumptions that the skills and attitudes, the insights and emotions, the knowledge, are all essentially the same whether for a building administrator or a central office administrator. In the world of education today, building administrators are moved into central office in the blink of an eye, with an uneasy presumption that they'll have to do the job. What other choice is there?

This paper challenges that presumption. Moving into central office from a building principalship is not always an easy career change to make, especially for a female. In a sense, because the whole focus of a central office position is different from anything experienced in the school building, it is as if the professional entering such a position again becomes a novice. There is a whole new system of different rules, regulations, forms, and operating procedures. In addition, an informal set of procedures and expectations generally exists in any organization and the new administrator is not always able to get an accurate reading of verbal and environmental cues of these unwritten rules. The entire situation is complex and often frustrating. It is important for the woman administrator entering a central office position for the first time to understand two concepts: the need for re-socialization as a central office administrator, and; the conflict between the role as a central office administrator and socialization as a female.

Fryer (1984) noted that the process sometimes called "organizational socialization" is a way to help the newcomer learn the organization's value system and the behavior patterns which are expected or required of its members and indicates that the typical socialization process for administrators exists at both the formal and informal levels. It is

generally agreed that both mentoring and coaching can be a vital component in this socialization process for an administrator (Playko, 1992). Further, some researchers state that women who do not have mentors can experience reduced job effectiveness because they are not privy to necessary information, lack assistance in developing important skills, and miss opportunities (Curcio, Morsink, and Bridges, 1989; Whitaker and Lane, 1990).

Another factor that can strongly affect the job performance of the female in a leadership position is her socialization as a woman administrator. Individuals and organizations mirror the social system of which they are a part (Offermann and Armitage, 1993). Since being a man or woman is at the core of our social lives and of our inner selves, gender is among the bases of the social fiber according to Warren (1988) in Gender Issues in Field Research. She explains that the dependence upon gender and other social categories for the societal division of labor forms the underpinnings of culture throughout history. Living within a society presumes, therefore, gendered interaction, conversation, and interpretation.

What does this mean for administrators in our society? The socialization of males prepares them to be leaders while the socialization of females prepares them to be followers and helpers (Pigford and Tonnsen, 1993; Harragan, 1977; Shakeshaft, 1987). Society tends to define leadership using so-called "male" characteristics. These stereotypes can place women administrators in a dilemma, leaving them to be either women or leaders; to be both is considered contradictory (Pigford and Tonnsen, 1993).

The Prologue

The tales in this paper are drawn from journal entries made during my first year in central office. My experiences, as recorded in the journal, served as the data for the original research study. The study is based on experience in an attempt to truly understand the situation. As Eisner (1988) believes, it is more important to understand what people experience than to focus only on what they do. Furthermore, although there is a current emphasis on the significance of teachers' experiences, very little work has been focused on

administrators' experiences; particularly, according to Shakeshaft (1987), there are few individual accounts, biographies, histories, case studies, or ethnographies centered on women. Although I recognize the limitations of qualitative research in making generalizations beyond the single case, I also appreciate that the snapshots of a first-year experience can provide future and present administrators with an opportunity to share the experience vicariously. Readers may benefit from an infrequent glimpse into the succession year of a central office administrator--a glimpse which provides rich information and an invitation to reflect on the implications of the experience.

Reading, dialogue, and constant reflection undergirded my attempts to address the questions that arose during my study. Each of these activities helped to reconfigure my initial conceptions of the first year central office experience into guidelines for my future behavior and reactions. Each of these resources lent strength to my efforts to function successfully in the new position. I utilize each of these activities as I relate my experience in order to bring enrichment to the account and to assist in arriving at the essence of, or the nature of, the experience. I am grateful that I was keeping a journal and that my experience became the keystone of my study, since these commitments served as motivation for engaging in extensive reading and reflection, research activities which helped me to understand and change my situation.

The Ex-Principal's Tale

...I will say that this move from a junior high school principalship to a central office position has not been an easy nor a pleasant transition for me and has resulted in ...uncharacteristic low spirits.... I didn't know whether or not I wanted to leave (the building) for a curriculum job and almost did not submit a letter of application and...almost called up (the superintendent) the day before my interview to tell him I wouldn't interview, simply because I wasn't sure I wanted the job.... However, I prepared well for the interview, I felt as if I did well during it and was again on the doorstep of decision, irresolute, not knowing whether or not I wanted the job. There is no way I can portray

how traumatic this whole time period was for me. The excitement that I gained from reading and talking and thinking about the possibilities in the area of curriculum was weakened by my thoughts of leaving a challenging and fulfilling position which I enjoyed and where I belonged after five years of being at (the junior high school). I was wary of stepping into something that might not be as good a position for my inclinations, skills, and preferences." (Journal entry of 6 September 1990).

Interviews for the newly-created position of K-12 curriculum director were held in June of 1990, my duties started in July, and by September, I was still more or less antipathetic to the position. Having been a building administrator for eight years, three years at the elementary level and five years at the junior high level, I had experienced moments of challenge, enjoyment, and satisfaction as a principal. However, as a result of my transition to central office, I found myself trying to find answers to questions such as: What was it about the central office position that was so different than my prior positions? Why wasn't this position as gratifying to me as the other positions had been? What was so negatively influencing my perceptions of central office administration? In short, why didn't I like it very much?

Another factor adding to my low state of mind is the fact that since this is a brand new position, I haven't had a secretary since July 1, and since leaving (the junior high school), I have had no desk, chair, (building) keys, parking place, etc. I was even left off of "pass on" slips, although the names of the two other new division directors were on them. It was funny for a while and then, for some inexplicable reason, I began to take it personally .... (Journal entry of 6 September 1990).

My new position, although coveted by others and considered desirable and prestigious by some, had few of the visible vestiges of prestige and status that the position of principal had. Harragan (1976) asserts that the trappings of an organization identify the important players and their significance in the game. The so-called status symbols include a private office signifying "executive" (Harragan, 1976, p. 233).... The interior

furnishings of an office are second only to the physical locale in signaling the relative importance of the inhabitant. Necessities and amenities such as desks, chairs, bookcases, etc. are more than efficiencies or conveniences.

Circumstances in the district dictated that I had no office space from July 1 to September 28 and shared an office with the person who had been hired into the other newly-created central office position. One of the male elementary principals, evidently understanding quite well the importance of prestigious status symbols, emphatically stressed that I should not accept someone's secondhand desk, but should instead get the largest, nicest, newest desk I could because someone in my position should have a big desk. Mark, the new director of business and finance, was also empathetic, seemed to understand the need for these "power emblems", and, without my knowledge, purchased a new desk for me. Although it was not a "large desk according to the status standards described by Harrigan and the principal who advised me, it was a nice one and was accompanied by a credenza and attractive chairs.

Another situation which added to the frustration of not having a place (office, desk, etc.) was the fact that the secretary assigned to assist me in my new position was out of the office on medical leave for six weeks and I therefore had no willing and readily accessible secretarial help. Although the other two new division directors shared a secretary, that secretary was not willing to include in her work load secretarial duties for a third division director. Three months of not having "normal" office amenities contrasted adversely with the preceding eight years of having pleasant offices and capable secretaries assigned almost solely to the principal. This contrast probably served to strengthen my misgivings about the job and may have shaped my subsequent sentiments even after becoming much more comfortably situated.

It was not until after I had been director of curriculum for a few weeks that I consciously took note of the differences between my former position as a principal and my present position. The stark spotlight of my attention was focused upon the differences

mainly as a result of my acute sense of loss and my discomfort with the new position. There was also an intense desire to discover why I was reacting to the job as if I were any one of the teenagers who had been new to my school in past years: not being a part of a group, missing my old friends, not knowing exactly what to do to gain acceptance, and sometimes defiantly rejecting any actions that would lead to "passing" into the new situation.

In retrospect, I now understand that some my frustration and unease during that first month and indeed, throughout the first year in my new position were simply my subjective responses to the significant changes in tasks, behaviors, norms, and values of the new position. Witmer (1995) uses Paul Bredeson's (1993) term of "role strain" to explain that a person who moves from one position to another may have to deal with feelings of "having lost control, fear of failure, self-doubts about personal competence and ability to be successful, impatience and frustration, concerns about loss of professional identity, and increased feelings of uncertainty brought about by significant changes in professional work life" (p. 100).

The New Director's Tale

It was several months before I realized that in my new job as division director of curriculum I was actually in a period of transition. It seemed to me initially that an administrator who was principal of a junior high school is still an administrator as director of curriculum in the central office. The job description may be different, but the role is still basically the same. As an administrator I would still be "one who administers; one who has the faculty of organizing; one who executes or dispenses." I was not prepared for the distinctive socialization process required for the new position.

Although I was an experienced administrator and had been in the district for five years, in a sense, the whole focus of the position was different from anything I had experienced previously. I was, in effect, a novice central office administrator. Not only was there a lot to learn about the field of curriculum there was plenty that I didn't know

about the elementary curriculum and little about the high school curriculum. I didn't know rules, regulations, forms, and operating procedures for curriculum and its development. I wasn't even aware of how many coordinators, curriculum or otherwise, there were in the district, as noted facetiously by one of my rivals for the position.

In addition, I wasn't cognizant that an informal set of procedures and expectations existed in the central office, let alone what they were. For example, since the secretary assigned to me was on leave because of a medical necessity and since I did not yet have an office, she told me to use her desk until she returned. It wasn't until later that I discover that since I was sitting at that desk, I was expected, more or less, to answer the phone for a nearby secretary when she was busy or absent from her desk. I chose not to answer it even after learning of the situation because I felt tied down with my new duties. The nearby secretary seemed miffed that I was there, because she wanted to move a part-time secretary to that desk in order to help her answer the phone. She may also have been piqued because no one had asked her or informed her about my presence.

I knew nothing of the unwritten rules and specifications of what was expected of me and I was not always able to get an accurate reading of verbal and environmental cues. As a result, I often behaved in ways which no one had anticipated. As noted previously, I wasn't prepared to cope with the expectations of others on how I was to behave as I moved into this role of increased responsibility and higher status. The whole situation was complex and confusing and I believe that by examining it in the light of two concepts, I bring some understanding to my frustrated and bewildering commencement in the central office position. These two concepts are: my need for re-socialization as a central office administrator, and; the conflict between my role as a central office administrator and my socialization as a female.

The Staff Administrator's Tale

Even though I was moving into a vastly different and uniquely complex situation in my transition from building administrator to central office administrator, the resocialization

process was not sufficient to be of much help to me. K. Lynch (1990), in an examination of women in administration points out that, in general, socialization for school administrators is informal, ambiguous, and filled with role conflict. My own experience suggests that socialization for central office administrators can be equally deficient, perhaps simply because the assumption is made that a long-time building administrator is sufficiently socialized.

Although I didn't realize my deficit for what it was at the time, I was desperately in need of information and guidance about the central office and curriculum, about guidelines a central office administrator was to follow, and about expected behavior for a central office administrator. Luckily, there were some strands of support that helped me through the first year. There were also many instances in which I perceived that there were no supports for me even though I needed them. There were some formal attempts to aid me in "learning the ropes" and there were informal and spontaneous extensions to me as an individual. There was advice and caring, there was mentoring, there were attacks and there was "the school of hard knocks." All of these facets of my experience assisted in my "resocialization" experience.

Among the formal procedures which contributed to my re-socialization was a retreat for the cabinet members, designed by the superintendent that first summer to help us deal with the reorganization of the central office administration. Information about the job and the expectations of the superintendent were shared, and the two-day session served to bring us all together so we could start to function as a team. In addition, the superintendent made it very clear that the newly-flattened administration would function more as a support for buildings and their staff members than previously. As a result of the "flattened" organization, the division directors were staff rather than line administrators and I did not fully understand the significance of that situation. Fryer (1984) claims that newly-promoted women are quite likely to misunderstand organizational structure and fail to understand "the very real important differences between line and staff administrative

positions, the importance of hierarchical distinctions, and the subtle aspects" of the rewards system (p. 30). She believes organizations should develop programs which enable women to perceive organizational components as men do and to be able to read cues to expected behavior. Although the retreat aided me in comprehending what my job tasks would be, it was not immediately clear what my role as division director would be. In fact, without my realization at the time, that retreat probably framed the beginnings of a troubling role conflict for me.

The first role expectation was: we were to be service personnel, supportive and non-authoritarian. We were to move away from a centralized structure. The second role expectation was: we were to develop, present, implement, and enforce a centralized system of curriculum and assessment, with a strong emphasis placed on outcomes and accountability. These were, in retrospect, clearly opposing expectations.

At the time, we division directors were sometimes besieged with doubt, wallowing in ambiguity, and confused by unforeseen barriers. We were at different times frustrated, at other times angry. Although I now understand what might have been the source of some of that stress and conflict, during the first three years of my central office position I did not have the ability to comprehend and deal with it. I wish that the socialization I underwent during the first year had included the realization of the implications of my being in a staff position and dealing with continual role confliuct.

The Mentee's Tale

As a result, I was late for my meeting with Steve (the assistant superintendent). As I had quite a few items stacked up to ask him about, we were there until 6:00 p.m. He is amazing—he is always willing to talk with me even when it is inconvenient. (Journal entry 5 February 1991)

In a study of two organizations, Harlan and Weiss (1982) reported both men and women managers new to a job had to learn new skills and that the learning occurred mainly through informal training which was as important as formal training. This informal

training may come in the form of hints and suggestions from colleagues, advice from predecessors, or additional help from a mentor. Both the men and women in the study reported that an informal network provided the necessary "how to" information. However, according to the authors, women reported that "they had to make a conscious effort to become a part of this network; ...men indicated they were typically brought into the informal network without any effort on their part" (p. 81). Sagaria (1985) states since administrators appear to acquire many skills informally, often as participant observers or through trial and error as part of their jobs, and since women have less access to the informal network, women are less likely to gain professionally from on-the-job training.

I was isolated from other cabinet members during that first year since the curriculum center was located a few miles away from the administrative center. This isolation from the informal network of the cabinet members probably contributed to some deficiency in my re-socialization. However, I continuously asked questions. I also visited the assistant superintendent's office many, many times that first year as he had served as director of curriculum in his position as assistant superintendent for many years prior to the reorganization. I invariably asked him long lists of questions which often ended in lengthy conversations with him. I remember reflecting on that fact and feeling guilty that I was taking so much of his time and feeling rather inadequate that I couldn't handle more of it myself. Even then, I suppose I was wondering why there wasn't more of a transfer from my knowledge and skills as a building administrator to my position as a central office administrator.

Although generally the evidence suggests that women are less involved in a process of collegial learning and mentoring (Sagaria, 1985, Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992; Schmuck, 1980; Shakeshaft, 1987), it is a generally recognized premise that mentoring is necessary and quite potent. "The most powerful training and mobility structure in the educational administration career, the sponsor-protégé relationship, occurs when a powerful person notices, tests, trains, and promotes a protégé" (Marshall, C., 1985. p. 133). It is evident

that mentoring can be a vital component in the socialization process of an administrator. It is generally recognized that effective mentoring is a two-way interactive process and that it should take place in a risk-free climate where both parties can express inner feelings, thoughts, and questions about their professional roles and jobs or personal problems (Playko, 1991).

As stated earlier, the assistant superintendent played a significant role in my re-socialization—my learning all the necessary details of my new position. As I did the reading for my study, I came to realize that his characteristics of empathy and caring; his willingness to listen in a seemingly non-judgmental manner; his warmth and encouragement; his willingness to counsel on affective matters and to provide historical information as well as facts about rules and procedures, written and unwritten, were all characteristics of a guide or a mentor.

I had lunch with Steve. He wanted to listen again and told me that he had neglected to say that, yes, it is all right to be yourself and expect others to accept you a little for who you are and not expect you to change completely. I'm sure that he sensed how low I had been the other day and wanted to help me feel better. (Journal entry 8 March 1991)

Steve, with his long history in the district and his common-sense approach, probably prevented me from making many errors that first year. In short, it is to be assumed that his advice contributed to my effectiveness. Steve was not the only colleague to serve as a mentor to me. The superintendent also gave me direction and advice. Some of my peers also provided advice, political information, and reactions to ideas.

The Woman Administrator's Tale

You're really interesting to us. I mean, you're not really like any of the other women we know around here. (A friend)

When I asked my friend what she meant by her comment, she indicated that the fact that I was an administrator and that I was pursuing my doctorate made me unique among the women in our town, which is a small rural town of about 12,000 people. Obviously,

the fact that I haven't forgotten this remark, made about four years ago, indicates that it made an impression on me. I hadn't really thought about the fact that my position and my schooling would make me that much different from other women. Or maybe I hadn't consciously thought about the possibility that the difference would be noteworthy.

The dilemma as I came to see it was somewhat complex. I was seen as different by a friend (who probably represented others' views as well). I was seen as different by my children, who may not have always expressed it outright, but definitely did express it indirectly in sometimes resentful and typically teen-age terms: "You're never home." "Everybody else's mom does!" And, at work, as one of the first two women central office administrators ever in the history of the district, I experienced problems based on the fact that I was a female administrator and was therefore different from men administrators, e.g. my secretary was overheard in the office saying that women should not be administrators!

Although several facets or differences of being a woman administrator were dealt with in the original study, I will address only one of those issues in this paper—that of communicating in large groups. The issue of communication has always seemed a stumbling block for me in some situations throughout my life. The work of Belenky et al (1986) and Tannen (1994) indicates that this is quite normal for most women. While researching for the original study, I read Belenky et al's (1986) discussion of women who think before they speak; and, because their ideas must measure up to perceived standards, speak in measured tones or do not speak at all. My response to this concept was written in my notes as follows:

I am at this point much of the time and it is very frustrating—I often want to speak, but fear making a fool of myself. And when I do get up the courage to speak, I am certain that I have made a fool of myself. The strange thing is that when I tell people how difficult it is for me to speak up, they claim not to see that at all. They say that they see me as speaking easily and choosing words well.

At another point in my research, I ask myself the question: Why don't I love to talk in a large group? I don't enjoy myself during meetings and presentations—the only time I enjoy myself in meetings is when I'm facilitating...

Courage and ability to speak with confidence and strength in public meetings was definitely a major issue for me in central office with the most difficult situations taking place during my first year in the new position. However, I sensed a steadily-improving ability to express myself and to stand my ground throughout the four years that I was a central office administrator. It seems, in retrospect, that many of my problems and confrontations might have had better outcomes if I had been able to express my self more competently and confidently.

In many ways, that first year, I felt as if I were on one end of a teeter-totter, with some mystical force being applied to the other end causing me to be as low as I could be at one time, and as high as I could be at another, and hitting all the different levels between the coming up and going down. I felt that I was verbally attacked in various ways and by various people during the first year, and yet by January 11, 1991, made the comment: "I believe that I can now say things and say them firmly without much fear of being attacked or in other ways not being listened to."

However, just three weeks later, I lament that I "lost my tongue as well as my wits" in a discussion with the superintendent, recounting that he had seemed to completely misinterpret my remarks on the previous day and that he truly didn't seem very interested in my ideas, "almost as if they aren't worth listening to." I wondered if it was because of him, because of me, or because of the ideas. (Journal entry, 31 January 1991) The next day at a retreat for cabinet members I felt disheartened because:

I was not able to say exactly what I meant and even though I had sworn to myself that I wasn't going to say anything or very little I still had to jump into the middle and make a fool of myself on several occasions. (Journal entry 1 February 1991)

Four days later, I was "up" again:

District Improvement Team met tonight. I mostly kept my mouth shut so I wouldn't be saying things judged to be foolish. I did make one suggestion and was told by (the superintendent) that it was a good idea. He accordingly adjusted his plan for going to the bargaining table, I think." (Journal entry, 4 February, 1991)

A few days later in a chamber of commerce task force meeting I was amazed to see that "I was now willing to really speak up and voice my opinion and that my opinion was often the same as others'—for the first time in three years. Maybe I am changing and am becoming able to cope with groups." (Journal entry, 8 February 1991)

Even though my confidence and ability to speak up in mixed groups was developing and I was feeling quite confident about my ability to facilitate meetings, during the second year in central office I was still struggling with my belief that I ought to speak out more in large groups and was seemingly unable to get over my fear that I might say something that would seem foolish (Journal entry, 1 December 1991). It was not until the latter part of my second year in the central office position that I would find myself consciously remarking that I was able to speak up and express my ideas with minimum trepidation in large mixed groups in front of people I didn't know.

Robertson (1992) cites some of the communications problems facing professional women as failure to speak up in mixed groups and dealing with interruptions by males in group meetings. She continues by stating that women tend to withdraw when interrupted, to maintain the conversation and to ask questions. Women's comments are more likely to be ignored. Belenky et al's (1986) research on sex differences in communication supports Robertson's claim: females have difficulty expressing themselves in public so that others will listen; they have to work at gaining respect of others for their minds and their ideas; they often feel unheard even when they believe that they have something of importance to say (many are acutely aware that men are more successful in getting and holding the attention of others). Considerable research shows that women in mixed-gender decision-making groups tend to talk less than men (Conoley, 1980; Tannen, 1994). Such sex role

socialization puts women administrators at a disadvantage in having ideas heard and recognized. Expertise will not be noticed if women choose not to speak. In addition, in many groups, it is quite frequently the persons who speak more often who qualify as leaders (Conoley, 1980).

The Epilogue

The tales told in this paper are only an indication of some of my first-year experiences in central office. What I hope has become evident from these tales is some "propositional knowledge." Each of the propositions helps to paint a picture of the move from the building to central office and, as such, may elicit recognition from those who have been there. They may also help someone contemplating the move to central office to enlarge her understanding of what might happen.

The first proposition is that a move to central office, or indeed any advance in a system, will result in the administrator, female or male, having a feeling of alienation. There is a completely different social structure beneath central administration that sets up a necessary separation and, as a result, most others in the district view and interact with the central office administrator differently than previously and tend to hold her at arm's length.

The second proposition is that both women and men administrators can experience a sense of worthlessness with a move to central office from the school. An administrator moving to central office is no longer doing what she had been doing, probably successfully, for many years. The resultant feeling is not necessarily a fear of inability to do the job, but simply a completely different job to do. The new central office administrator is not trained to do it. Whereas previously the job had centered on youngsters, it now focused on systems and adults.

The third proposition is that a person new to central office must establish contacts, networks, and mentoring situations in order to learn all the facets, formal and informal, of the position and of being in the administration center of the district. If necessary, the new

person needs to directly ask for others to inform her and work with her in order to establish parameters and expectations and to avoid pitfalls.

The fourth proposition has to do with the power that socialization exerts on humans in our culture today: the socialization of female administrators as "women" or "feminine" has as much influence on our administrative behavior as does the social construct of a woman administrator others have embraced. Our own socialization as women is much more powerful than we realize. Some women, especially those strongly sponsored by males throughout their administrative ascendancy, may not be as aware of the notions of propriety and role which serve as underlying principles to their behavior. Or, these women, minimizing their socialization as women and their existence in a male-dominant world, may have chosen to ignore the "differences of context" that Tavris (1992) identified: communication, emotions, power and status at work, and familial obligations. They may have chosen to overlook as well other significant differences in areas such as care-taking, income, and sexual experiences and concerns. Or, they may recognize them as differences and choose not to deal with them in an overt way.

I, myself, was surprised when I learned about and began to understand the strong societal factors underlying some of my feelings and reactions to situations. Prior to this study, I was not completely cognizant of the fact that my shaping as a woman was having an effect on my level of comfort as an administrator.

In summation, any person aspiring to be in central office needs to be aware of the possible alienation, the feelings of worthlessness, and the need for socialization into the position. I have learned and hope the tales have helped others to realize that structural, organizational, and systems factors can have a great impact on the well-being of a central office administrator. I have learned that as a woman administrator, I will always have to "live on the margin" and that this should stimulate me to be creative. I realize that society is not built for me, that I much find ways around it (Ann Weick, personal communication, 6 May 1993). I now know that I had been living in conflict—trying to live up to my image

of a woman, a central office administrator and attempting to be true to myself at the same time. For those moving into a central office position, it is essential to align those images.

Telling the tales is, for me, a necessity. The stories that we as humans tell each other about our daily lives are engrossing to me. I cannot help but listen to them and tell them. Such narratives help me to learn about human nature and myself. It is my desire that my tales will in a similar manner help others as they progress on their administrative paths.

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